



The Nationalisation of Land

If “Land to the tiller” is a revolutionary slogan that will motivate our allies the peasantry and the petty-bourgeoisie, then what about: “Nationalise the land”?

These things are not the same. The petty-bourgeois republic

is not the same as Karl Marx's dream (see the main linked text, below) of "*National centralization of the means of production*", which Marx here associates with the ultimate moves in the transition to communism (i.e. the "withering away of the state").

In the **attached** short, 2-page letter to Mr Applegarth, Marx writes:

"The future will decide that the land cannot be owned but nationally. To give up the soil to the hands of associated rural laborers would be to surrender all society to one exclusive class of producers. The nationalization of land will work a complete change in the relations between labor and capital and finally do away altogether with capitalist production, whether industrial or rural. Only then the class distinctions and privileges will disappear together with the economical basis from which they originate and society will be transformed into an association of 'producers'. To live upon other people's labor will become a thing of the past. There will no longer exist a government nor a state distinct from society itself."

In the alliance of worker and peasant that must be made for the purposes of overthrowing the rule of the big bourgeoisie, the demand of the peasants is for ownership of land.

Yet Marx, already, in 1869, is clear in his mind that the distribution of land to the peasants makes a situation that "is

farther off the nationalization of land than... landlordism”
and *“converts the tiller himself into the most decided enemy of all social progress, and above all, of the nationalization of the land”*.

Such problems arose in the Soviet Union after the revolution, following which “collectivisation” took place by force.

In China things were done differently. There, the peasant class was given land and nursed for generations, and the peasant class is still the majority class in China, although hundreds of millions have been drawn off the land and into the cities to create what is now by far the largest national working proletariat that the world has ever seen.



What Marx calls in this letter *“appliance of modern agricultural improvements”*, and which he thought were excluded from use by peasant farmers, were redesigned and manufactured in China at a suitable scale for peasant use (e.g. the Chinese walking tractor). Even with such mechanical implements, peasant progress was slow, as it can only be slow. Yet the transformation of China has been as relentless as it has been systematic.

Illustration (Poster): *“As a result of state-farm and collective-farm construction the USSR became the country of the most powerful agriculture in the world.”* (1931)

Second Illustration: Chinese walking tractor, designed for peasant family farming.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Abolition of Landed Property, 1869, Marx](#).
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